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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

**Memorandum of Conversation**

DATE: February 20, 1958

M-709

SUBJECT: Various German Problems

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Josef Rust, State Secretary, Federal German Defense Ministry  
Jonathan Dean, Office of German Affairs

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I had a short talk with Dr. Rust following his lunch with Mr. Reinhardt today. He raised the following major points:

1. French-German-Italian Cooperation on the Production of Nuclear Weapons. (SECRET)

100. 12 Dr. Rust stated explicitly, as he had implied a number of times during the conversation at lunch, that he had been greatly impressed by the size and expense of the physical plant needed to produce only one tactical nuclear missile, the Jupiter, whose assembly line he had seen at the Chrysler plant in Chicago. Dr. Rust said that he, as a man with experience in heavy industry and some experience in armaments, now recognized more clearly than ever the tremendous physical and financial effort involved in a nuclear missile program. He said that he was going to make this point as forcefully as possible both to Minister Strauss and to the Chancellor on his return to Germany in order to try to impress them with the fact that any idea of Continental independence in nuclear missiles was a "hopeless pipedream for many years to come". Dr. Rust said that it was, of course, somewhat annoying and occasionally rather humiliating for the Federal German government not have the means for the defense of Germany in its own hands and to be continually dependent on another power for the defense of the German homeland. But facts were facts and had to be faced; his trip had convinced him that the financial and resource requirements for such a program were so heavy only the United States in the Western Alliance had sufficient substance to carry out a serious nuclear missiles program. The Continental powers might carry out their planned collaboration in the development of nuclear missiles, Dr. Rust said, but they simply were not capable as far as he could see of implementing a missile program which could be a substitute for an American source of these weapons. Dr. Rust said that his arguments might not be convincing for those German leaders who

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favored independent European development of nuclear missiles as a long-range project. The demands of this group for reassurance as to the control and use of nuclear missiles in Europe were in some degree legitimate and should be met in some way. Dr. Rust suggested that this might be done through alteration and expansion of the NATO apparatus, at least for a trial period, to convince the doubters who now believed that the United States had such a narrowly selfish view of its own interests that independent European action was a necessity.

I said Dr. Rust's views were most interesting and reflected the realities of the situation as they were seen by many Americans. I suggested, that under the circumstances, it might be very worthwhile for Minister Strauss to visit one or more missile assembly lines during his pending visit here so that he could himself see some of the evidence underlying Dr. Rust's case against independent European development. Dr. Rust energetically agreed with this suggestion.

762.00 2. German Reunification. (CONFIDENTIAL)

Dr. Rust said that he and many other German leaders were convinced that Russian agreement to German reunification could not be obtained for decades, if ever. Yet this view was obviously far too negative to provide the basis for the German government's published policy on reunification. Dr. Rust noted that, during his first stop in Washington on his present trip, he had described the current hostility of the independent press and of the educated classes in Germany toward the Chancellor on the ground of his "inactivity" in the reunification field. Dr. Rust said he did not know how the German government was going to extricate itself from this predicament, particularly in the light of the apparent (though undesirable) trend toward a summit conference, which should at any rate be "delayed as long as possible". Dr. Rust said that the German government would have no chance at all of surmounting its present difficulties if the United States should fail to carry out its own special role with regard to reunification. Given the circumstances, where most reasonable people realized that practically no imaginable Western action or Western concessions could be expected to resolve the problem, the one essential thing which the United States could do to help the Federal Republic was to keep the German population convinced of the genuineness of American interest in reunification. If for some reason the Germans began to suspect that the Americans were not really interested in reunification but merely repeating a routine formula - they already strongly disbelieved in the genuineness of French and British interest - there would then no longer be the slightest rational basis for hopes for even a long-range resolution of the unity question in the Western sense. The ensuing conclusion in the minds of many Germans that the only remaining course was some sort of accommodation with the Soviets would be very hard to control.

I replied that the Department was acutely aware of the point Dr. Rust had raised and would continue to do its best to provide evidence of abiding interest and support in the reunification problem. I pointed out that, if it were finally decided to

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hold a summit conference, it was clear, given the present state of German opinion as described by Dr. Rust himself, that the German government would be under considerable pressure to come up with "something new" on reunification. In the circumstances, the government might feel it necessary, for tactical purposes, to give serious consideration to ideas which were previously considered unorthodox or not quite safe. Dr. Rust said he considered this quite likely under the circumstances. I said that if such ideas did become current within the German government, the government should feel no hesitation in mentioning them to us. They could at least be given a frank and open examination and some might prove of value. I remarked that nothing would be more unfortunate than for the German government to refrain, in the preparations for a summit conference, from confidentially advancing ideas it considered worth discussing because of a belief that its stock was not high enough in the West to risk it. The ensuing conference might well be unsuccessful in any case, but the German government, exposed to heavy domestic attack, might be tempted to blame the United States because of the feeling that, if it had had a chance to contribute more of its ideas during the preparations for the conference, at least its subsequent position vis-a-vis German public opinion would have been far better. Dr. Rust agreed vigorously with this view, and pointed out that a similar reaction within the German government had in fact followed the Geneva Summit Conference in 1955.

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3. German Relations with Poland. (CONFIDENTIAL)

Dr. Rust enquired as to the Department's present attitude towards German relations with Poland, implying that the Federal Government was rather anxious to take some action in this field. I summarized the points made by the Secretary in his October conversation with Ambassador Krekeler on this subject, stating that, up to now, we had favored such relations in principle, but had recommended a very slow approach. If the Germans felt that the question of timing should be re-examined, we would be glad to do the same.

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4. Impressions of America. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

X During the lunch with Mr. Reinhardt and afterward, Dr. Rust made a series of remarks about the impressions he had gained from his four-week trip through this country. The main theme of these remarks was that the trip had reinforced Dr. Rust's confidence that the United States had the material strength to maintain the necessary burdens of the cold war - armaments and economic aid - over the further ten to twenty-year period during which he felt this might be necessary. Dr. Rust said the trip convinced him that the U.S. would overcome the initial disadvantage of the Soviet Sputnik and gradually overtake the Soviets in this field. He repeatedly stated his belief, however, that neither the United States nor any other country could maintain the necessary economic burden and at the same time continue to expand consumption

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and particularly to bear the costs and inefficiency arising from interservice rivalry in the Armed Forces. Dr. Rust said that, as an economist, he thought it might be necessary for the U.S. to tighten its belt somewhat, and that, as a defense official, he would urgently recommend an "iron crackdown" on the three services. Interestingly enough, Dr. Rust several times mentioned his belief that U.S. efficiency, both in government and private industry, was severely reduced by a weight of red tape and "regulations" next to which all German practice paled in comparison. This reaction seems to have been due to his experiences with the industrial security system of the Armed Forces, which Dr. Rust now strongly opposes for adoption in Germany.

Such relatively minor points aside, it would seem from Dr. Rust's description of his trip through the country and from his reaction to his talks in Washington, that the trip was one of the outstandingly successful ones of its type, both from Dr. Rust's personal point of view and as regards the impressions created in him by the trip.

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